

**DRAFT**

**STREETSCAPE STUDY OF ARTERIAL**

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**P I C O R I V E R A**

## PICO RIVERA

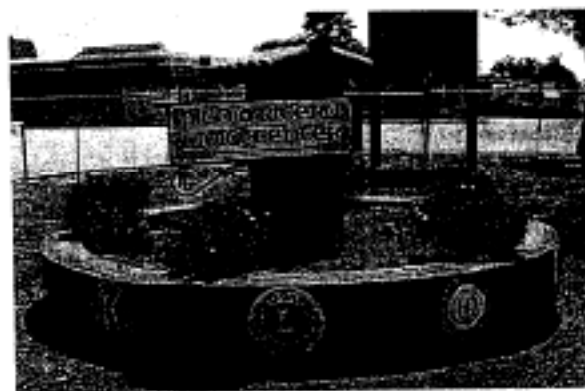
### STREETSCAPE STUDY OF ARTERIAL HIGHWAY

The following *Livable Communities* case study focuses on the revitalization of a commercial arterial through the use of streetscape enhancements and urban design recommendations. More specifically, the case study addresses how to handle the transformation of a large thoroughfare historically dominated by industrial truck traffic into a mixed-use boulevard that contributes to the overall structure and vitality of the City.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS



*The Gateway City of Pico Rivera.*



*Pico Rivera's civic complex.*

The City of Pico Rivera has a population of 59,177 and covers a total land area of 8.4 square miles. The City is bounded to the west by a flood control district, and to the east by Interstate Route 605. This study focuses on Washington Boulevard, a major thoroughfare comprised of a wide range of uses including single and multi-family residential, large and small-scale strip commercial, and a large area of former industrial land.

Washington Boulevard is one of two major east-west routes that cross the City, the other being Whittier Boulevard. Whittier Boulevard functions as the City's major downtown commercial corridor, while Washington has long been dominated by a single industrial use, most recently the Northrop Grumman Corporation. For most of its length, the roadway itself has 3 lanes in each direction and a center turn lane. The major intersections along Washington Boulevard occur at the cross streets of Paramount, Rosemead, and Passons Boulevards.

The intersection of Washington and Paramount Boulevards has a business-industrial character, defined by the Northrop Grumman site to the east and other manufacturing uses lining Paramount to the south, with some mixed multi-family residential and commercial on the north side of Washington Boulevard. Strip commercial and parking areas on the north side of the street dominate the Washington-Rosemead intersection, with the Northrop Grumman site on the southwest corner and a housing development in progress to the southeast. The Washington-Passons intersection lies in an area surrounded by single-family homes, with gas stations sited on three of its four corners. A supermarket occupies the fourth. All three cross streets pass through residential areas to the north, which dominate the urban fabric between Washington and Whittier Boulevards.



----- Project Study Area

## City of Pico Rivera - Orientation Map







Northrop Grumman industrial site.

The parcel known as the Northrop Grumman site, on Washington Boulevard between Paramount and Rosemead Boulevard, plays a major role in the future of the corridor. The decline of the aerospace industry has hit Pico Rivera particularly hard, and the median income of Pico Rivera has dropped well below that of the county and state. A large percentage of the City's workforce was at one time generated directly or indirectly by the activities of Northrop Grumman, and at its peak the Northrop Corporation employed over 12,000 persons at its Pico Rivera location, but cutbacks in Federal Government orders for the B-2 stealth bomber, the plant's most recent project, have forced the facility's closure. The resulting parcel of two hundred thirty five developable acres is a rarity for Los Angeles County, and represents a unique opportunity for the Pico Rivera.

### *City Initiatives*

In 1983, the boundaries of the Pico Rivera *Redevelopment Project Area* were amended to include the Northrop Grumman site on Washington Boulevard between Paramount and Rosemead Boulevard. The new boundary also encompassed several properties at the intersection of Washington and Rosemead.

The southeast corner of Washington and Rosemead Boulevard was the subject of the *Specific Plan 301* of February 1996. This plan allowed High Density Residential designation for this property in support of a proposed development of single-family with a senior housing component. The first phase of this development (the single-family component), located south of Camdale Terrace, has been completed. The second phase, a senior housing complex, is scheduled to begin construction at some future date.

The *Rancho de Bartolo Specific Plan*, of December 1997, proposes four development scenarios for the Northrop Grumman site. These alternatives include manufacturing retention, a mega-mall, a theme park, and mixed-use development. The plan recommends a phased development plan that is targeted towards a cluster of businesses and tenants that will be effective in creating jobs and generating tax revenue. In April 1999, the City issued permits for the southern 40 acres of the Northrop Grumman site for industrial development, and construction is nearing completion.



Northrop Grumman site, fronting Pioneer Boulevard.



#### Legend

- Vacant or Underutilized Site
- Somewhat Underutilized

Notes:

- a. Proposed/Planned Residential
- b. Proposed/Planned Gas Station

## Vacant and Vulnerable Sites

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0' 500' 1000'



Gateway Cities Council of Governments

## *Urban Design Context*

Currently, the uses along Washington Boulevard vary as one moves along the corridor. Moving eastward along Washington, the character of the roadway shifts from one that is heavily industrial, to commercial, and finally to residential. Several competing factors are at work influencing the character of the thoroughfare. Incoming retail and commercial uses have pushed residential away from the street in some areas. High speeds and heavy truck traffic have resulted in residential uses that are isolated from Washington Boulevard by buffers or building orientation. The decline of manufacturing in the region, as evidenced by its impact on the local employment rate and the specific loss of Northrop Grumman, has resulted in vacant and underutilized parcels along or adjacent to the corridor.



*Strip mall and auto-oriented retail along Pioneer Boulevard.*

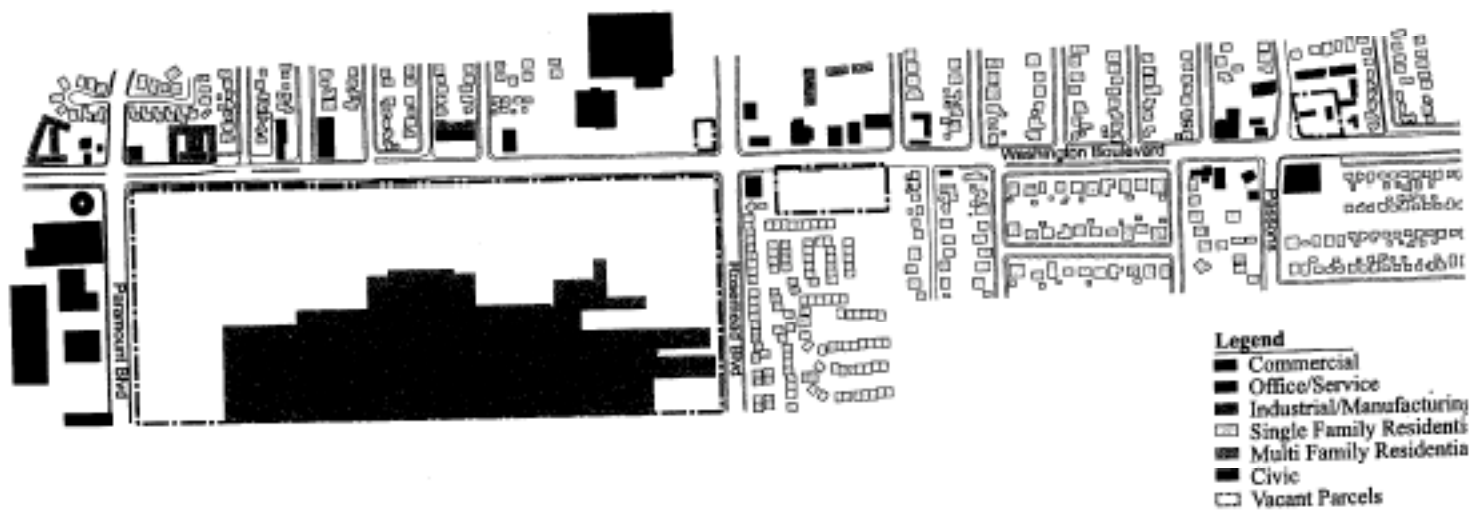
The commercial land uses along Washington Boulevard are primarily auto-oriented. Many of the retail uses along Washington Boulevard are struggling: several "for lease" signs were noted in smaller storefronts, and there are several vacant lots in addition to the Northrop Grumman parcel.

Washington Boulevard's location and its role in the regional transportation system suggests that it will remain a major trucking course, despite the decline in manufacturing. However, there is no longer a high volume of traffic accessing the Northrop Grumman site, and local traffic destined for other industrial areas to the west of Paramount Boulevard has decreased as well.

The streetscape of Washington Boulevard is not well defined and lacks pedestrian amenities. Large expanses of parking areas and uninterrupted paving isolate buildings from the street, and in some locations the right-of-way exceeds 100 feet.



*Auto-serving surfaces in the project area.*



## Existing Development

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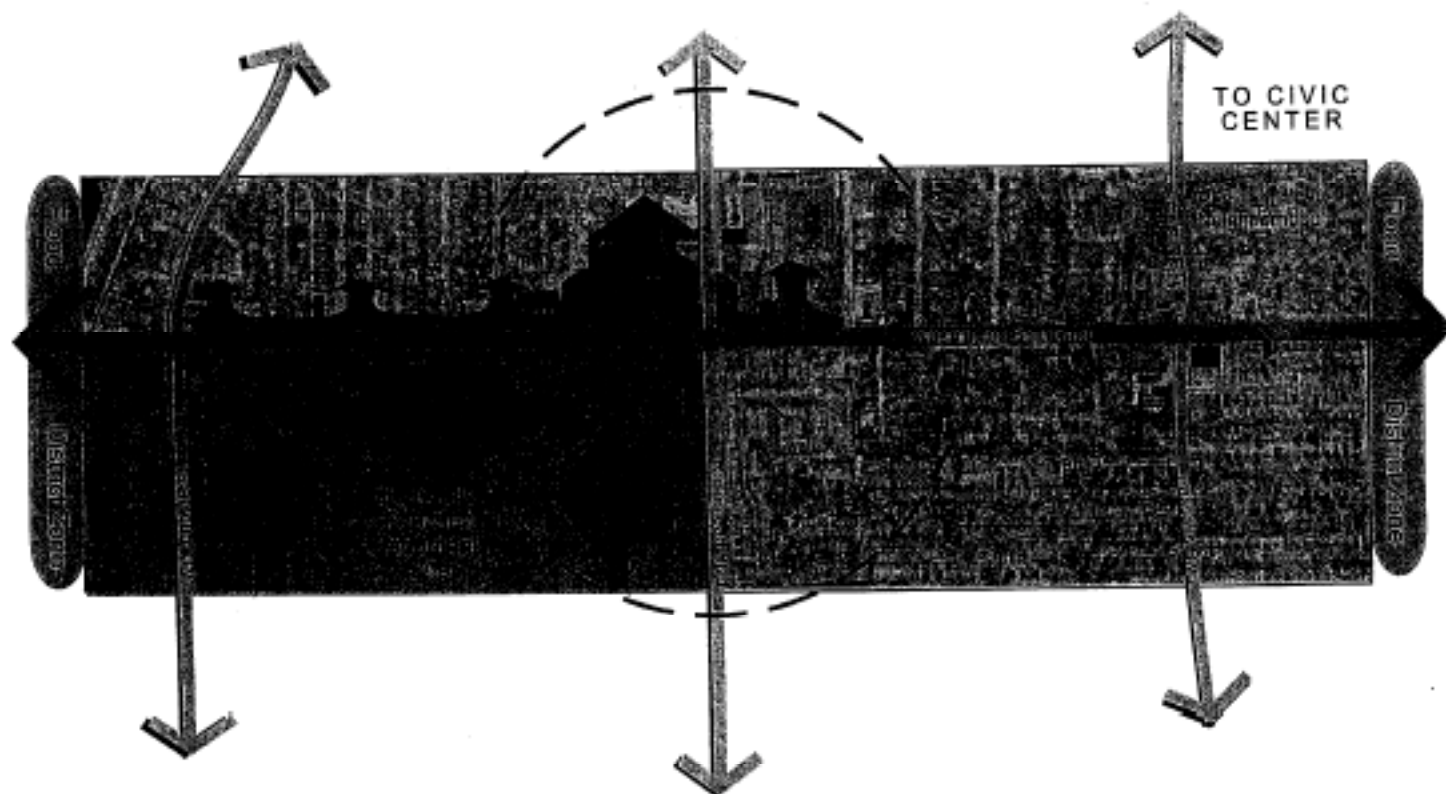




*This neighborhood utilizes landscape as a buffer from traffic.*

Although plantings are utilized as buffers alongside some of the residential neighborhoods, street trees and other landscape plantings are limited. There are no significant buildings or architectural elements along the corridor to give it any kind of defining character. There is no street furniture except for benches at bus stops, and the "cobra head" streetlights are functional but lack aesthetic appeal. Most of the existing sidewalks are unprotected from traffic lanes and in some cases are as narrow as six feet. There are few services a pedestrian would want to access on foot and without the type of retail attractors that provide incentive for walking, design improvements alone would not be sufficient to enhance the pedestrian experience along this corridor. A diverse mix of uses, including residential, offices and supporting retail, would be needed to encourage pedestrian activity.





#### Northrop Grumman Site

- 235 acres of vacant industrial land creates an opportunity for redevelopment.
- Site's street frontage along Washington Boulevard has a strong impact on the character of the corridor.

#### Washington Boulevard

- Washington Boulevard is a major trucking route and is seldom used by pedestrians.
- Commercial land uses are encroaching on nearby residential land uses.
- New housing development and existing commercial uses at the intersection of Rosemead and Washington create potential for activity nodes.

## Urban Design Context

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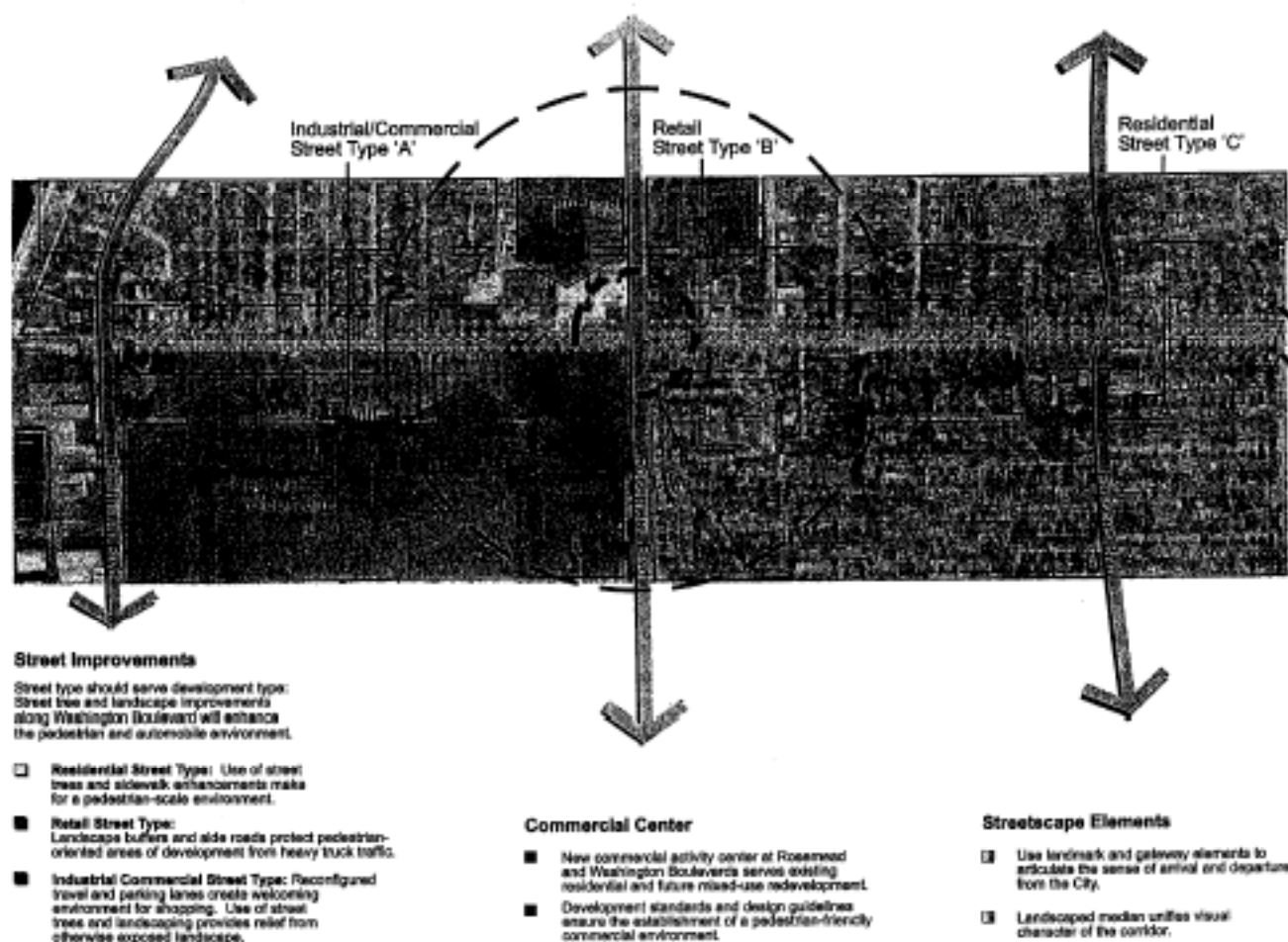
## URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

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- *Street type should support land use: Create standards for insuring that the streetscape type and the land use along the corridor are properly matched.*
- *Create a planted median with turn lanes to reduce the scale of the paved surface.*

The existing conditions of vulnerability to change along Washington Boulevard presents an opportunity to create a street type that supports the uses along its edges. Through design guidelines that govern setbacks, specify landscape elements and enhance the pedestrian realm along the corridor, the City of Pico Rivera can create standards that ensure that the streetscape type and the land use along the corridor are properly matched. One recommendation for improvement of the streetscape along the corridor is the conversion of the middle lane to a planted median (in those locations where the lane is not required for turning). The planting of a single row of street trees would provide a consistent element that unites the different street types that exist along the corridor.

Other recommendations that will help to strengthen Washington Boulevard include the development of a commercial node that serves the local community at the intersection of Rosemead and Washington Boulevards, and gateway elements will help to define the corridor.



## Urban Design Recommendations

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## INDUSTRIAL / COMMERCIAL

### STREET TYPE 'A'

- Buffer future industrial development from the street with additional planting zones and architectural design guidelines that address the street.
- Integrate the new development on the Northrop Grumman site with the rest of the corridor by breaking its scale down into walkable blocks, particularly at its perimeter along Washington and Rosemead Boulevards.



Transit stops along Pioneer can be developed to become pleasant waiting places.

The reuse of the former Northrop Grumman fabrication facility will have a strong effect on the character of Washington Boulevard. Although the *Rancho de Bartolo Specific Plan* considers several use possibilities, three of the four options recommend that commercial, institutional or office elements be sited at Washington Boulevard. It is therefore likely that, regardless of what occurs in the remainder of the site, the street edge will be dedicated towards uses of this character. This presents an opportunity to create a streetfront character that is reflective of Pico Rivera's new economic direction. In the wake of declining manufacturing options, business, office and light industrial activities are among those that could be supported in Pico Rivera. Both the uses proposed and the forms they take will have a strong effect on the streetscape of Washington Boulevard, and should be viewed as an opportunity to positively impact the visual character of Pico Rivera along this corridor.

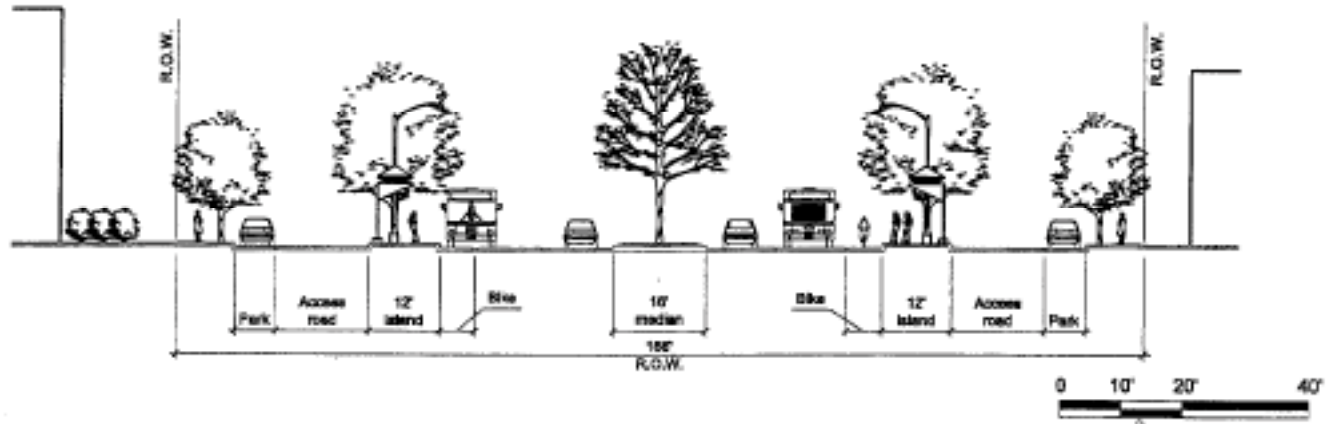
Design guidelines can positively influence the streetscape at the Northrop Grumman site as it is developed. Specific setback requirements for any new construction would introduce building frontage along the corridor and encourage parking at the rear of new buildings. An additional lane dedicated to drop-off traffic in front of new entrances would also foster street activity. Existing transit can be supported through the redesign of existing bus stops, currently identified only by signage in front of the Northrop Grumman site. These transit stops could become special places along the sidewalk that contribute to the streetscape, offering shade and shelter with landscaping and street furniture.

Development guidelines should also address block structure on the Northrop Grumman site to ensure that its scale is broken down to be contiguous with the existing pattern of the corridor. The *Rancho de Bartolo Specific Plan* breaks the parcel into 9 sub-areas along an internal road structure, but it is recommended that controls be put in place so that each sub-area supports a finer grain pattern of development. A pedestrian scale development configuration should be coordinated with the streetscape along the edge of Washington Boulevard to create a revitalized street corridor that supports the diverse range of uses that line it.



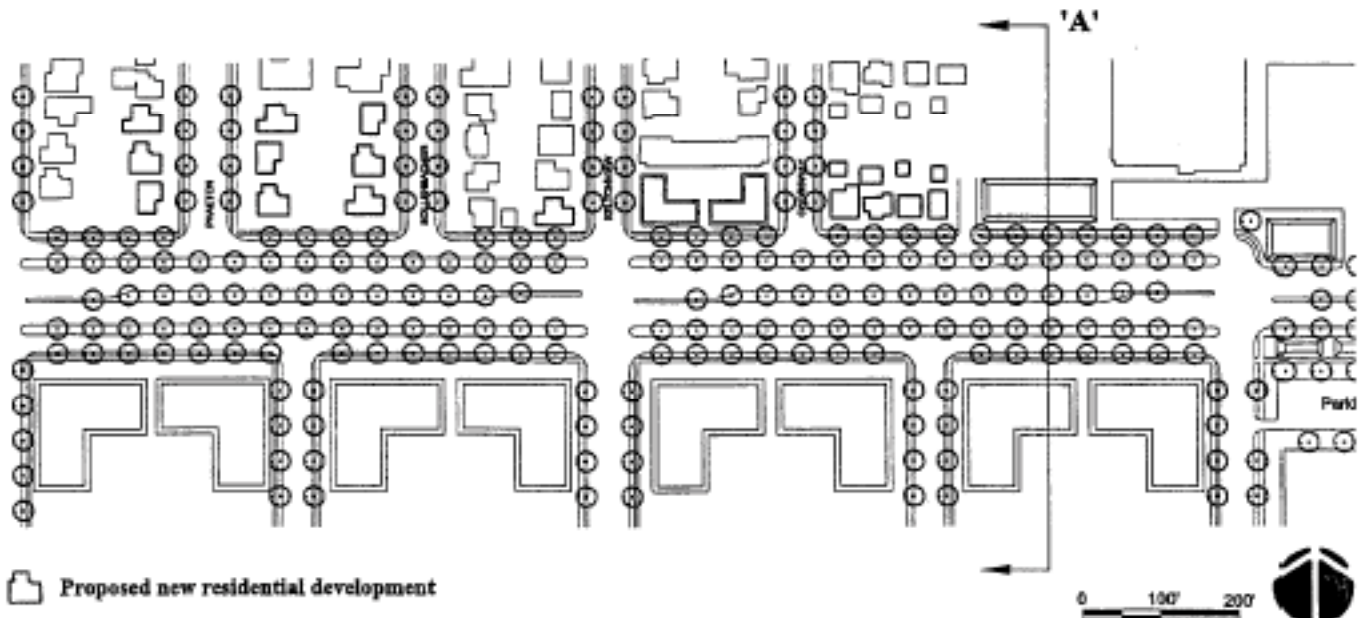


Existing Section 'A'



### Industrial/Commercial Street Type - Section 'A'

- 12' sidewalks planted with street trees 50' on center create buffer zone for amenities like bus shelters and street furniture.
- Access road provides drop-off and on-street parking to serve new mixed use development at the Washington Boulevard edge of the Northrup Grumman site. Other development, such as manufacturing is located in the interior of the site.
- Bike lanes reinforce the pedestrian character of the corridor by providing additional buffer for pedestrians.
- 16' median planted with street trees and ground cover gives the street a "parkway" character, and unifies the diverse streetscape types along the corridor.



## Washington Boulevard - Proposed Street Type 'A'

## RETAIL

### STREET TYPE 'B'

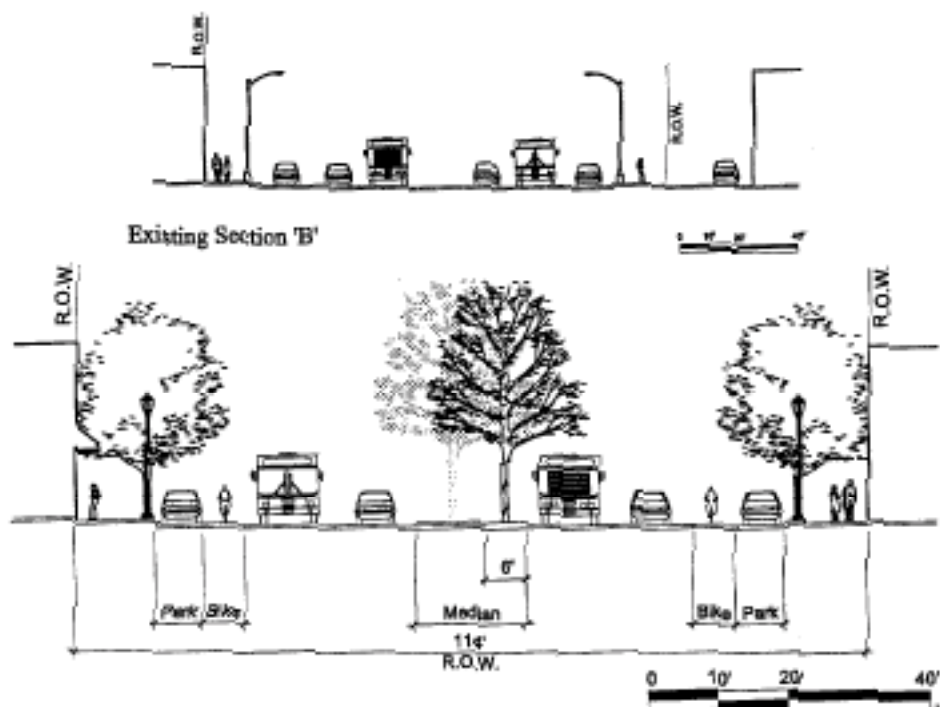
- **Encourage commercial development that fronts the street and is not isolated by large expanses of parking.**
- **Develop the intersection of Rosemead Boulevard and Washington Boulevard as an attractive commercial activity center and city crossroads with a lively mix of uses such as retail, housing and public space.**



*Infill retail can give life to a currently underdeveloped streetscape.*

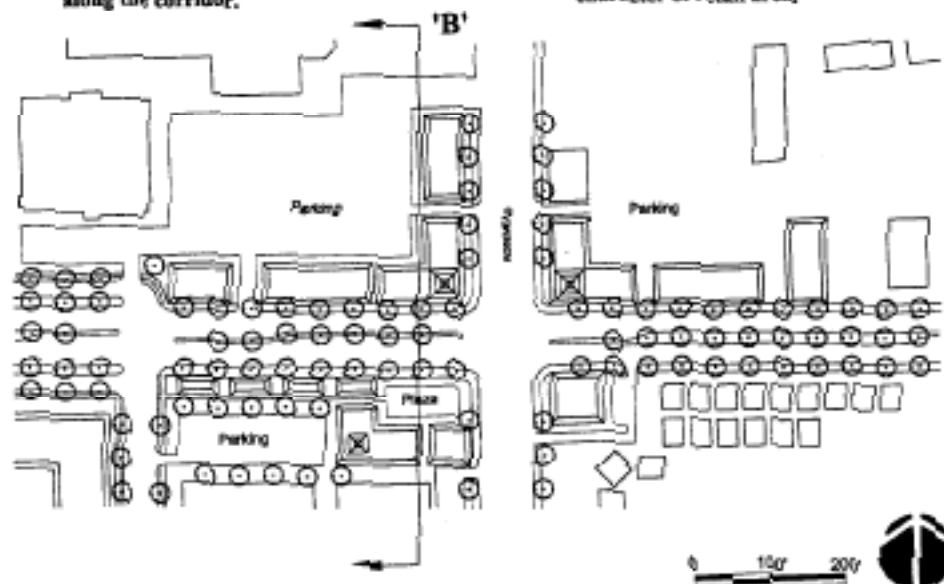
There are various forms of retail along the central stretch of Washington Boulevard, particularly at its intersection with Rosemead Boulevard. These range from big box-type uses such as "Big K" to smaller strip-type development. These uses generally maintain a setback dedicated to parking which in some instances extends up to 200 feet in depth. The commercial uses are dispersed along the corridor, which add additional disincentive for patrons from moving on foot between them, so each individual location must attract its own customers and provide its own parking. The more accessible downtown stretch of Whittier Boulevard provides residents of Pico Rivera with a concentration of shops. By providing a similar experience, where high quality retail is clustered tightly together to facilitate walking between shops, Washington Boulevard can be repositioned to attract a larger share of the region's shopping dollars.

To create a tightly clustered yet highly visible retail node, infill commercial buildings must line the street edge of Washington Boulevard. This would serve two purposes: one, it would bring the retail element directly up to the sidewalk, encouraging walking between retail destinations and drawing customers into shops that may not have been their original destination; and two, new liner buildings along the street would shield the large parking lots from view and reduce their impact on the visual character of Washington Boulevard. In particular, the intersection of Rosemead Boulevard and Washington Boulevard could be developed as an attractive commercial activity center and city crossroads with a lively mix of uses such as retail, housing and open space. By attracting complementary uses that can share patrons and parking, the new retail can serve the nearby residential communities as well as the new development that will occur on the Northrop Grumman site. Also the creation of a "vital center" will help attract job-creating investment to the Northrop Grumman site.



### Retail Street Type - Section 'B'

- New commercial node at the intersection of Washington and Rosemead Boulevards focuses retail activity at an intersection and creates a gateway to the Whittier Boulevard downtown area to the north.
- 16' median planted with street trees and ground cover gives the street a "parkway" and unifies the diverse streetscape types along the corridor.
- New retail buildings along the street edge generate pedestrian activity and provide destination and convenience retail to support the Northrop Grumman redevelopment. Parking is located on street as well as in off-street lots behind retail buildings.
- Bike lanes provide additional means of access to retail and support pedestrian character of retail area.



## Washington Boulevard - Proposed Street Type 'B'



## RESIDENTIAL

### STREET TYPE 'C'

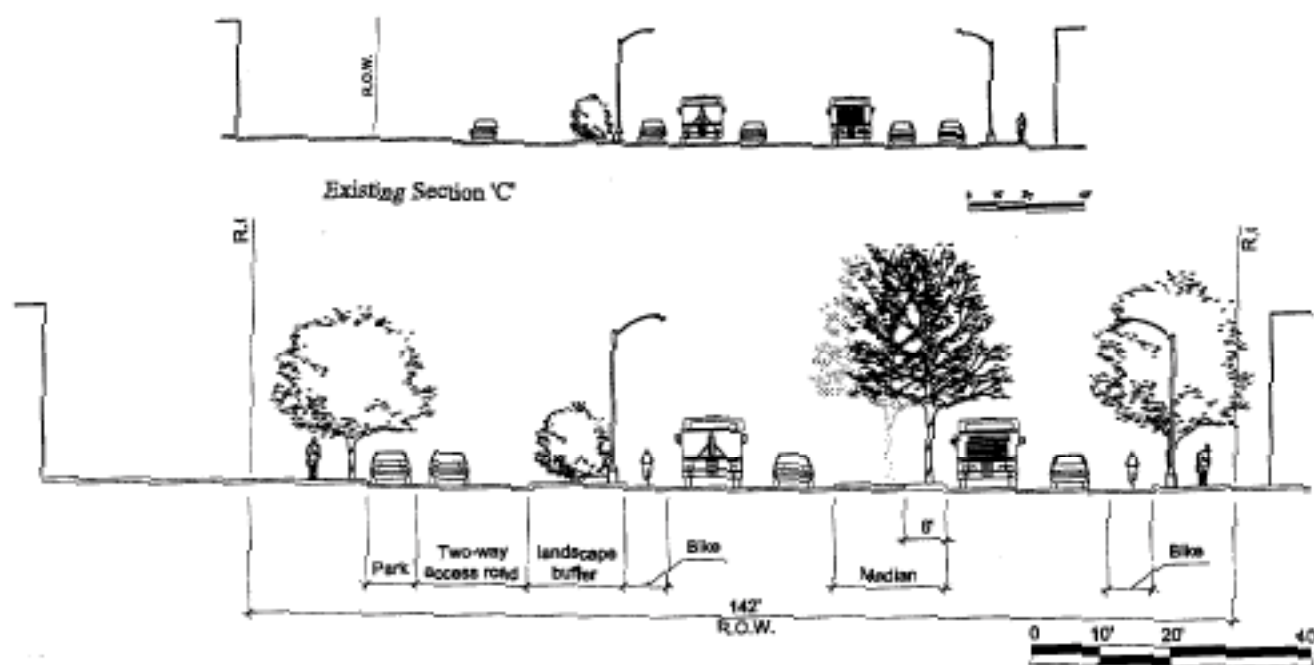
- **Create street tree and landscape buffers along Washington Boulevard that protect pedestrians and adjacent land uses from the effects of heavy truck traffic.**
- **Install new lighting at a pedestrian scale to improve the walking and biking experience along Washington Boulevard.**

The residential areas that line portions of Washington Boulevard, particularly along its eastern end, have very little relationship to the arterial. Over time, residences have either turned away from the activity of the street, or have utilized strategies such as buffers and walls to disconnect themselves from Washington Boulevard. Creating a "residential boulevard" character along the areas of the corridor with high concentrations of homes will reclaim those portions of the thoroughfare for the existing neighborhoods. In many of the residential areas, the outermost lane of Washington Boulevard exists as a residential street that provides access to the homes. Through additional landscaping and buffering from the traffic lanes of Washington Boulevard, this access road will be given a new character that simultaneously supports multiple activities suited to a residential neighborhood, such as walking, biking, parking and low-speed local traffic. A line of new street trees along the median edge of Washington Boulevard would reduce glare and apparent expanse of pavement, while adding the dappled shade and shadow typically associated with residential thoroughfares. Other strategies, such as dedicating eight feet of the twenty-three-foot access lane to parallel parking and reducing speed limits, will also make the separate access areas more suitable for other, non-auto-oriented uses. Implementation of these improvements along the residential portions of Washington Boulevard will serve to extend the best features already in place and put the high quality of the neighborhoods on display along the arterial.



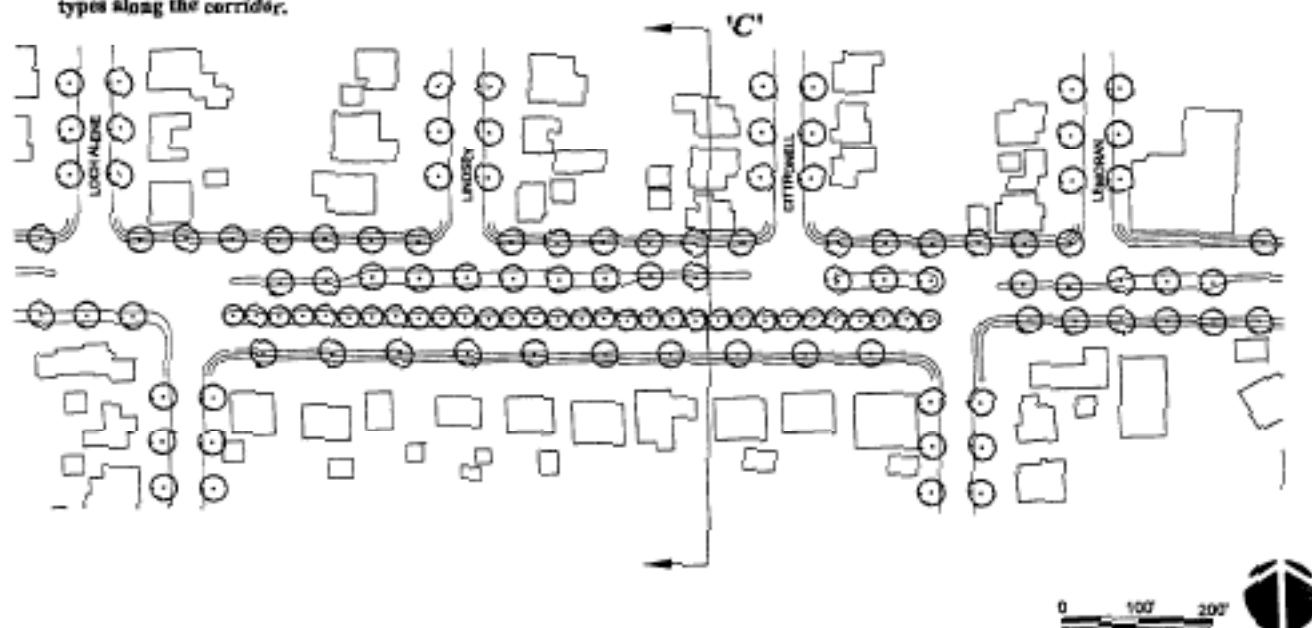
*Streetscape improvements can improve the character of residential access roads along Pioneer Boulevard.*





### Residential Street Type - Section 'C'

- Residential street trees and landscaping along existing residential access roads buffer homes from traffic of Washington Boulevard, and provide a new "front yard" for the residences.
- 16' median planted with street trees and ground cover gives the street a "parkway" character, and unifies the diverse streetscape types along the corridor.
- Additional street trees along Washington Boulevard buffer side street-facing residences from street noise and traffic.
- Bike lanes reinforce pedestrian character of corridor and provide alternative means of access to the area.



## Washington Boulevard - Proposed Street Type 'C'